

ABSTRACT OF DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for progressively processing data is described. One or more embodiments of the invention provide for using multiple processing nodes to perform data processing. Each node may perform part or all the steps involved in data processing. Processing nodes use progress indicators to communicate the status of the processing progress. An embodiment of the invention use progressive processing and progress indicators to perform incremental processing where data processing is performed in sequence by multiple processing nodes. Another embodiment uses progressive processing and progress indicators to delegate processing by one processing node to another processing node dedicated to providing a specific service. This method provides for efficient usage and management of data processing resources, and allows single intermediate processing node to share the processing load with other processing nodes.